

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(Stratford-upon-Avon, baptized on April 26th 1564 – Stratford-upon-Avon, April 23rd 1616).

English playwright and poet, Shakespeare is considered one of the best playwrights of all times. He wrote 38 plays, 154 sonnets and some other poems.

Ideal portrait of Shakespeare by Angelica Kauffmann

Angelica Kauffmann's Ideal portrait of Shakespeare was based on George Virtue's engraving placed on the frontispiece to Alexander Pope's edition of Shakespeare's works. On the trompe-l'oeil basement there is an oval representing the Fame that decorates the poet's tomb with flowers. On the left side of the basement it is visible a cup, symbol of poison, and a bloody dagger, symbol of tragedy. On the right there is a mask, symbol of comedy.



Angelica Kauffmann, Ideal portrait of Shakespeare, 1788, Stratford-upon-Avon, Royal Shakespeare Company

Shakespeare's funerary monument, bust carved by Gheerart Janssen

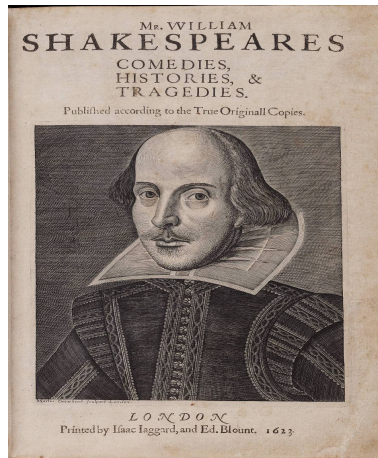
The bust placed over Shakespeare's tomb at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford was realised between 1616 and 1623; not having documents about, it is assumed it was commissioned and approved by Shakespeare's family. Janssen was active from 1600 onwards near the Globe Theatre, thus it is likely he knew Shakespeare.



Gheerart Janssen, Shakespeare's funerary monument, 1616-1623

Martin Droeshout engraving

The engraving was realized in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death. The author, Martin Droeshout, likely has never seen Shakespeare in life and he took inspiration for his engraving from a portrait of the poet that got lost. Nevertheless the face was considered passable by Shakespeare's friends, John Hemminge and Henry Condell who inserted it on the frontespiece of the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays, the First Folio.



Martin Droeshout, William Shakespeare, an engraving, 1623

The Chandos portrait

It is the most famous portrait of Shakespeare and it was live painted around 1610. However it is not certain the man represented is William Shakespeare. The portrait owes its name to James Brydges (1673-1744), first Duke of Chandos, the first documented owner of the portrait. Traditionally it is considered made by Richard Burbage (1567-1619), actor and friend of Shakespeare. In 1856 it was given – first artwork of the collection – to the National Portrait Gallery of London when it was opened, where it is still shown.

The earring and the loose shirt-ties of the sitter are considered by experts emblematic of poets.



Richard Burbage, Portrait of Shakespeare, 1610